

AFTERNOON TRANSCRIPT

Emily,
darling sister
they come to whip you tomorrow
for the bells are ripe,
the farmer tells the weather
Warning us of storms
great things to come in the sky

and O Emily
sister of November
I hear you died
and it was not San Francisco
for your body lay limp
on the road to Boston.

-- Mary Sullivan

China, Maine

Didn't she know?

(a prophecy)

What was she doing in Brooklyn, anyway,
of a Saturday night, traipsing the streets
on the trail of a fortune-teller, with a friend
who thought she was caught, and needed advice?
She, who'd always hated and feared the occult?

Hadn't she just walked out on a crackpot husband
who told her he sat in a poker game with a gang
of spooks every Friday night in her clothes closet?
Who introduced her to a bird sitting on her windows
waiting, he said, to receive her spirit when she die
Who'd roll his eyes, and pointing under the bed, say
'There's nothing there...now don't be afraid...SEE?'

Then why did she go so willingly into that basement?
Why hadn't she run from that vestibule and its smells
of cabbage, stale corsets and gin before that shuffling
old hag hung her face out, and fixing her eye, said:
'Now don't you be asking me anything, dearie,--
Whatever I can do you can.'